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Walnut Creek

National Wildlife Refuge

Land Acquisition
Priority Plan

LAND ACQUISITION PRIORITY PLAN
FOR
WALNUT CREEK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
JASPER COUNTY, IOWA

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I. DESCRIPTION

The Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) is located in the vicinity of Walnut Creek, a tributary to the Des Moines River in Jasper County, Iowa. The Refuge is planned to include about 8,626 acres. Historically, vast tracts of naturally flooded wetlands and native prairie provided resting, nesting, and feeding habitat for migrating ducks, geese, and a variety of other migratory birds and resident wildlife within the Des Moines River basin. The Walnut Creek Refuge is located within the Prairie Pothole Joint Venture of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. The Authority for the Refuge is the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956. Habitat within the Refuge acquisition area will be purchased with Land and Water Conservation Funds from willing sellers.

II. RESOURCE THREATS

The last 100 years has seen a dramatic decline in wetland areas essential to maintaining waterfowl, other migratory birds, and resident wildlife populations that are dependant on this type of habitat. Since bottomland hardwood, marsh, and prairie habitat are naturally fertile, they have been consumed by large scale agricultural development. With intensifying agriculture, expanding urban pressures, and increasing industrialization, both the quality and quantity of wetland and native prairie habitat continue to decline in Iowa.

III. PROPOSED ACTION AND OBJECTIVES

The primary purposes for establishing Refuge are to restore native tall grass prairie, wetland, and woodland habitats for breeding and migratory waterfowl and resident wildlife; to serve as a major environmental education center providing opportunities for study; provide outdoor recreation benefits to the public; and provide assistance to local landowners to improve their lands for wildlife habitat.

IV. PROTECTION ALTERNATIVES

The Secretary of the Interior is authorized to acquire land and interests in land by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or exchange. Several alternatives were considered in arriving at the most appropriate and cost effective method of habitat protection. Each acquisition alternative minimizes facility development and creates public use opportunities while providing long-term protection for wetland and wildlife resources. The alternatives considered were:

A. No Action

Under the "No Action" alternative the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) would not take any additional action. The Service would rely on the existing Federal, State, and local land use regulations to preserve the wetland and wildlife values on private lands within the Refuge acquisition area. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act of 1977, Endangered Species Act of 1973, Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1972, Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956, and Food Securities Act of 1985 (Swampbuster) provide some protection for

wetland and wildlife resources within the Refuge acquisition area. Given the history of the Walnut Creek watershed and the apparent lack of effective land use regulations, it is expected that past trends will continue.

B. Acquisition and Management by Others.

Under this method of protection, the Service would rely on Federal, State, and local government agencies and programs, private conservation organizations, and private citizens to preserve and manage the resources within the Refuge acquisition area. The Walnut Creek Refuge acquisition project (8,626 acres) is a part of a larger resource protection effort in the Des Moines River basin within an area identified as the Des Moines River Greenbelt (Figure 1).

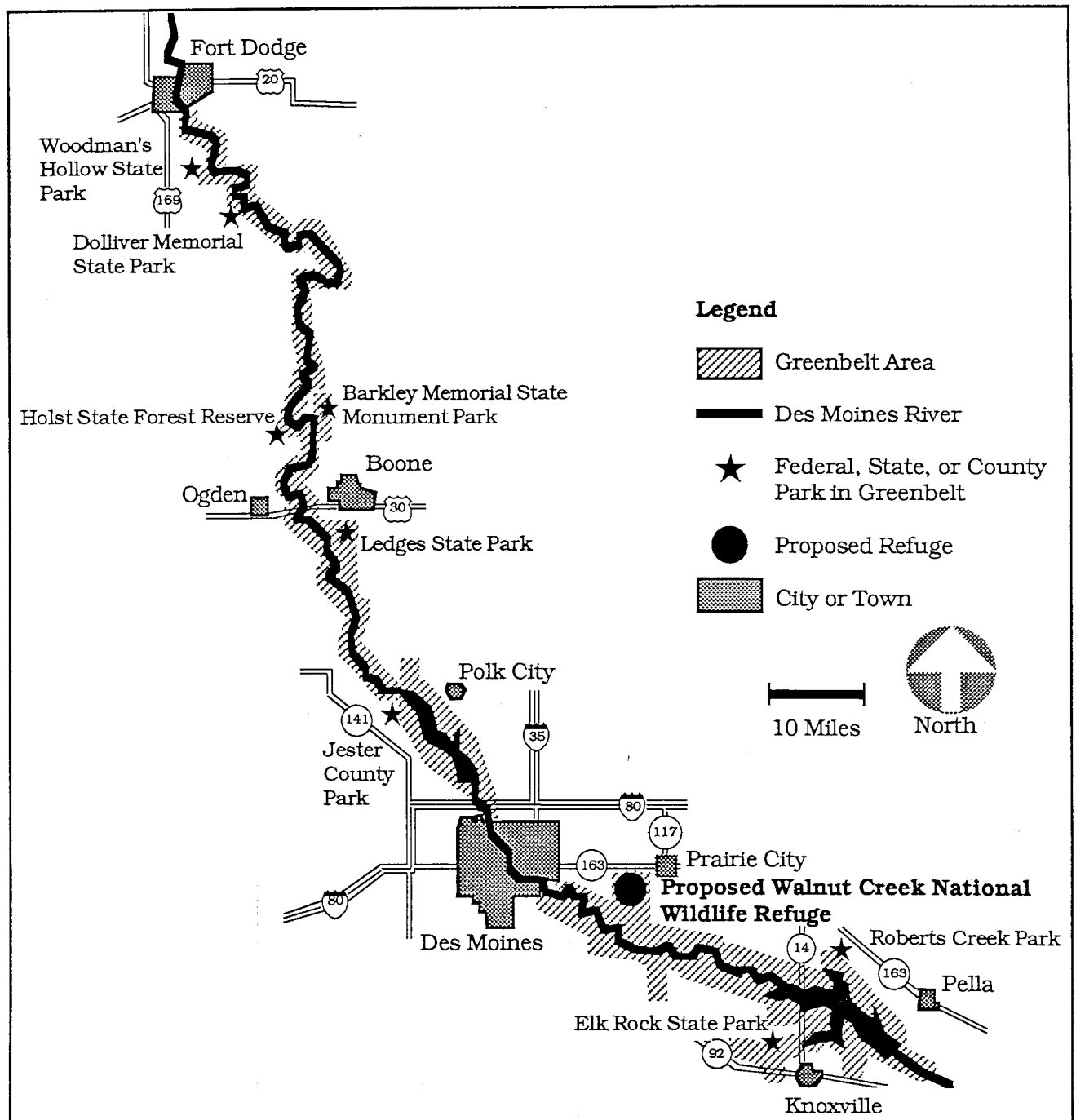
Refuge purposes and objectives are slightly different than those of the other conservation organizations that are active within the Des Moines River Greenbelt (Greenbelt). Service programs and goals are compatible with and will enhance the efforts of the other conservation organizations. Habitat deemed essential to Refuge management programs may at best be a low priority for the other Greenbelt participants. Much of this wetland and native prairie habitat would not likely be adequately protected, restored or managed without Service involvement. Acquisition and management by others, in consort with the Service, is one of several protection alternatives that should be implemented to adequately protect the wetland and native prairie resources within the Des Moines River basin.

C. Easement Acquisition and Management Agreements.

The Service recognizes that it is not necessary to own a fee title interest in all land in order to assure its protection and appropriate land use. Easements are considered where public and private land uses are currently compatible but an interest in the property is needed to assure permanent protection or to allow public access and resource management. Easements are a type of resource protection that give the Service the ability to prevent certain land uses incompatible with Refuge objectives while allowing the property to remain in private ownership.

Easements constitute an interest in land in the form of a property right and are binding upon subsequent owners. Easements place development and use restrictions on the land to assure that private uses will remain compatible with the preservation and public use of the Refuge. Land uses that have little or no impact on Refuge objectives could continue at the discretion of the landowner. However, this method of acquiring interests in private property may not be economically practical in some instances because all development and management rights may have to be acquired by the Service in order to meet refuge objectives. Acquisition of these rights could increase the cost of less than fee acquisition and approach the cost of fee title acquisition. This type of protection alternative in some instances could prove to be uneconomical.

Figure 1. Des Moines River Greenbelt



The Service may also enter into management agreements with private landowners. This would allow for public access, management, or rehabilitation of habitat on property not in Federal ownership. The Service may also maintain and operate programs in connection with the agreement as appropriate. Management agreements on privately owned land may be used as interim protection measures when funds are unavailable for acquisition or provide for exchange of services and financial assistance.

Management agreements may be applied where there is likely to be a continued operating relationship between the parties. They may be especially appropriate for properties within the Refuge acquisition boundary that are owned by other public and private conservation organizations. The viability of these agreements would be determined during negotiations and be based on the Refuge management plans and landowner preference.

D. Fee Acquisition

The Service policy is to acquire only the minimum interest necessary to meet Refuge objectives. Under certain circumstances, fee title is the only viable option for protection of valuable resources. This is especially true when developmental pressures or certain types of management activities such as prescribed burns, water management, public use or others require all economic values to be acquired. The acquisition of an easement protecting the resource values needed to meet Refuge objectives may essentially equal full market value of the property.

Fee title interest should be acquired where Refuge resources require permanent protection not otherwise assured; where land is needed for visitor use and facilities development that is not provided through other means; where potential land uses could have an adverse impact on acquired Refuge resources; and where Refuge habitat restoration and management activities necessitate the transfer of all interests in the property to the Service. Fee title interest can be acquired by donation or purchase at market value. Fee title acquisition transfers all rights of ownership to the Service.

V. PURCHASE ALTERNATIVES

Land and interests in land may be acquired in fee title for the refuge by several methods which include exchange, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, and donation. Acquisition by exchange requires that Federal properties identified for exchange must be of equal value or provisions must be made for a cash payment to equalize the exchange.

Because Land and Water Conservation Fund monies will be used to acquire the refuge, property owned by State or local government may only be acquired by exchange or donation. In addition, private landowners may wish to donate land or interest in land for tax benefits associated with such contributions.

Even though the Service intends to purchase the refuge lands from willing sellers, occasionally the seller and the Service cannot reach an agreement on the value of the property being acquired. In these instances, a "friendly" condemnation action can be initiated that will result in a Federal court

determining the fair market value of the property. Additionally, a condemnation action can be useful in overcoming title defects. In both situations, the landowner must be agreeable to the condemnation.

Public Law 91-646, the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, entitles landowners, tenants, and others to certain payments provided they are displaced by a Federal land acquisition program. These entitlement include housing differential, moving expenses, and other incidental expenses involved in selling property and/or in relocation.

There are specific limits to the amount of relocation payments. These payments are in addition to the purchase price of the property and are not taxable under Federal tax laws. Public Law 91-646 describes the entitlement and prerequisites required to establish eligibility. Relocation advisory services will be provided to all persons displaced from the refuge by the acquisition of their property.

Any direct purchase of land or interest in land is dependent on the availability of funds. The Service may acquire properties where proposed use and development could significantly damage wildlife resources or would be incompatible with the refuge objectives or if no other effective means of preventing damage is available, regardless of priority. In these instances, the Service will immediately attempt to acquire and pay just compensation for such land or interest in land. If this fails, Congressional authority is required prior to the filing of a Declaration of Taking in order to prevent resource damage.

VI. COORDINATION

The Service hosted an information exchange with landowners in Prairie City, Iowa on July 7, 1990. On July 19, 1990 another informational meeting was held with elected officials, community leaders, area organizations, the general public, and local landowners at the Monroe/Prairie City Middle School in Prairie City, Iowa. The meetings were publicized by news releases to local newspapers, radio, television, and word of mouth. Copies of the Final Environmental Assessment were sent to all landowners within the Refuge.

The Service will coordinate with a Refuge advisory committee during the Refuge acquisition, planning, development and management. A special workshop will be jointly hosted by the Service and the Jasper County Farm Bureau during 1990 for landowners within the Refuge acquisition area. The program will focus on the opportunities and options available to the landowner when considering the sale of land to the Service.

VII. SOCIOECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS

There will be no significant socioeconomic or cultural impacts associated with the acquisition of the Refuge. Acquisition of lands will be on a willing seller basis and would occur over a period of many years. The transition from predominantly an agricultural community to a conservation, recreation, and agricultural community is expected to be gradual. The shift would not be commensurate with acquisition and development and therefore, it is not

expected to create any abrupt changes in the affected communities.

There will be annual payments to counties from the Refuge Revenue Sharing Fund that will minimize the impact on the county tax base and local school districts. Refuge acquisition, employment, and economic impacts would be moderated by funding, willing sellers, and changes in the local communities. The economic impact will be negligible and the Refuge could add economic diversity and stability to the local area. It is expected that slightly more money could be made by more individuals, having a positive impact on the local economy and employment.

The Refuge is composed of 81 parcels that are owned by 52 separate landowners. There would be no instances of an uneconomic parcel remnant being created as a result of Refuge acquisition. Federal law prohibits it.

VIII. ACQUISITION PRIORITIES

Land included in the Refuge acquisition project is located in Jasper County, Iowa. Priorities were assigned to each of the parcels to facilitate the timely protection of those areas of most importance to Refuge objectives. Landowner preference will have an influence over the type of interests, if any, acquired by the Service.

1. Criteria

Several criteria were considered when assigning acquisition priorities:

- A. Condition and type of wetland and wildlife habitat.
- B. Existing and potential resource threats.
- C. Existing ability or potential of the area to contribute towards Refuge objectives.
- D. Existing ability or potential of the area to contribute towards the objectives of the other Greenbelt participants.
- E. Existing or potential contribution to resource problems.
- F. Protection alternatives and methods.

2. Acquisition Priority

The Walnut Creek Land Acquisition Priority Plan identifies three acquisition priorities:

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Priority I | Fee Title Acquisition |
| Priority II | Fee Title Acquisition |

Priority III

Easement

Landowners interested in considering an offer from the Service to purchase their land at market value may direct their inquiry to:

Refuge Manager
Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge
R.R. 1, Box 103
Puxico, MO 63960

(314) 222-3589

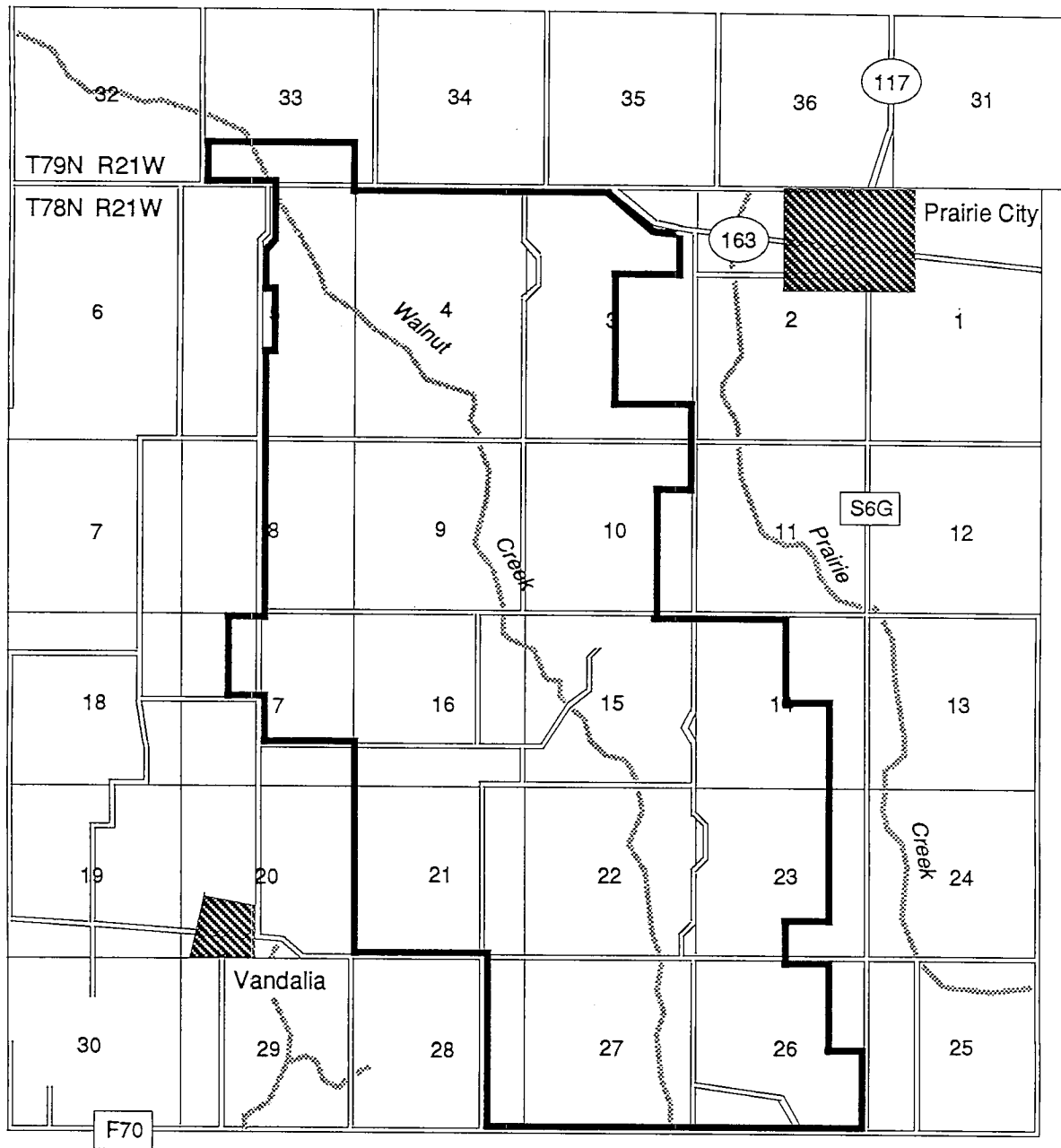
IX UNIT MAPS AND UNIT TABLES

Taxable Acres: 8,278






Non-Taxable Acres: 348

Total Acres: 8,626

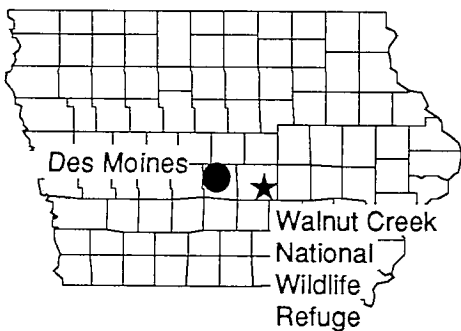
Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge



Legend

-  Study Area
-  Water Feature
-  Town
-  State Highway
-  County Highway

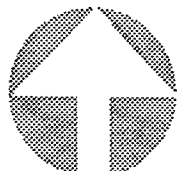
Location



Scale in Miles

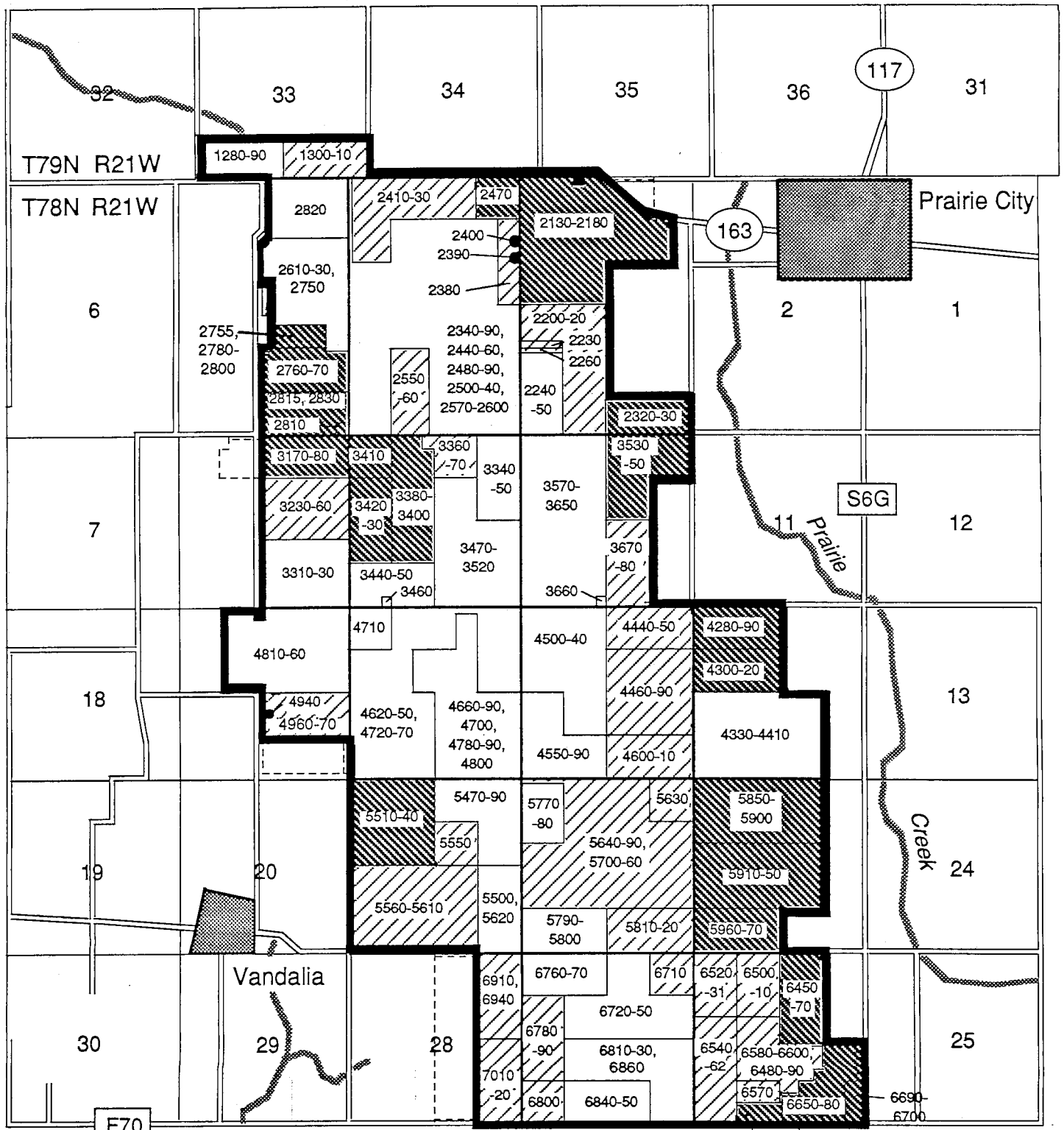


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North

Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge Land Protection Priority

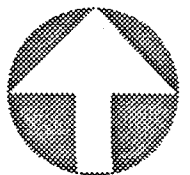
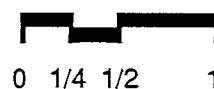


Legend

- Refuge Boundary
- Water Feature
- State Highway
- County Highway

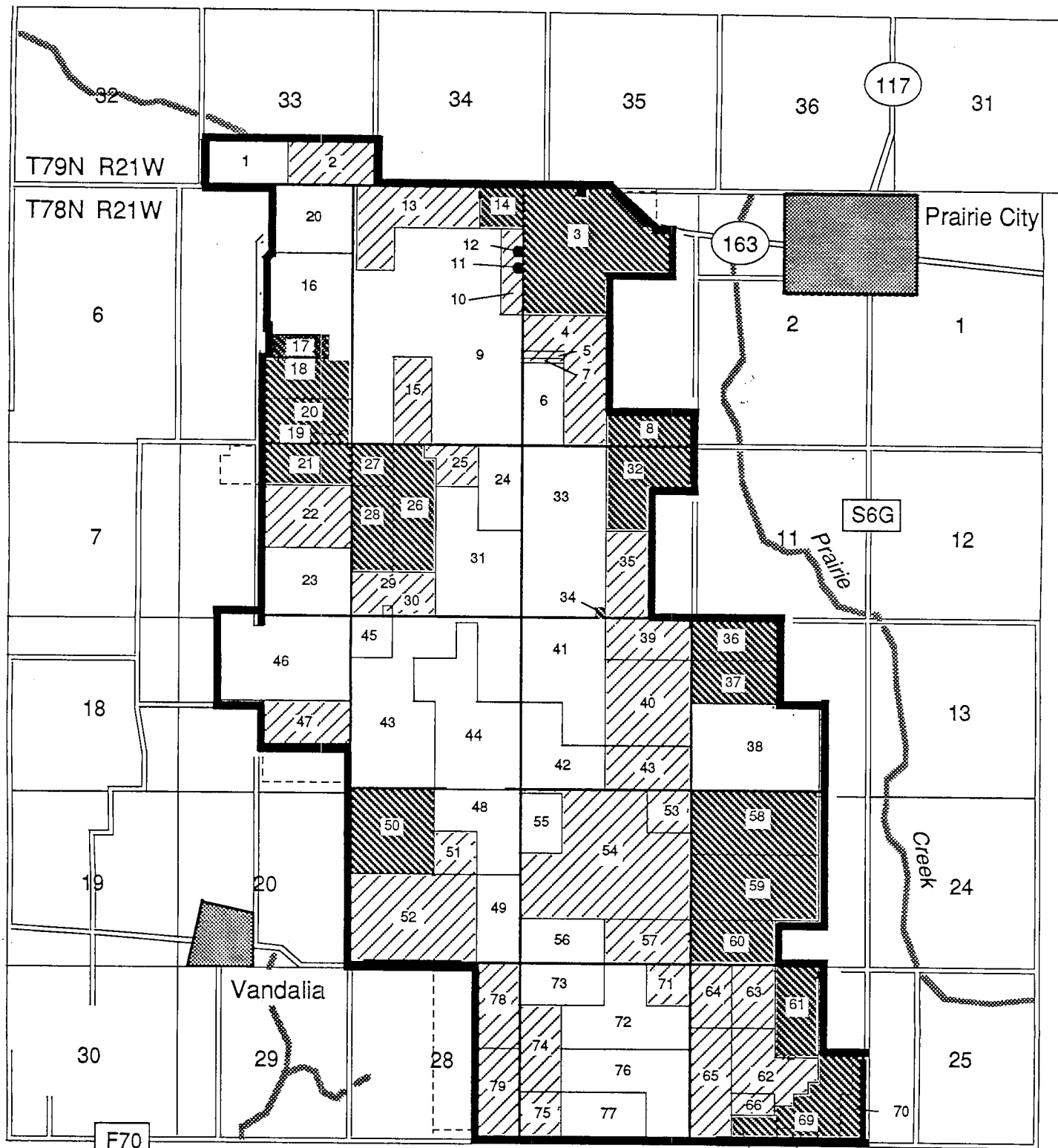
- Priority 1
- Priority 2
- Priority 3
- Town

Scale in Miles



North

Walnut Creek National Wildlife Refuge Land Protection Priority



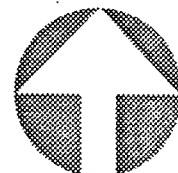
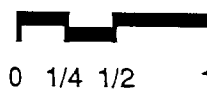
Legend

- Refuge Boundary
- Water Feature
- State Highway
- County Highway

- Priority 1
- Priority 2
- Priority 3
- Town

10

Scale in Miles



North

WALNUT CREEK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

PRIORITY I

Tract Number	Tax Number	Acreage	Total Acreage
1	1280	37.50	76.00
	1290	38.50	
6	2240	38.00	70.67
	2250	32.67	
9	2340	39.00	595.00
	2350	10.00	
	2360	40.00	
	2370	20.00	
	2440	40.00	
	2450	40.00	
	2460	2.00	
	2480	10.00	
	2490	40.00	
	2500	75.75	
	2510	43.25	
	2520	2.00	
	2530	39.00	
	2540	40.00	
	2570	39.00	
	2580	39.00	
	2590	40.00	
	2600	38.00	
16	2610	10.00	136.64
	2620	10.00	
	2630	79.00	
	2750	37.64	
20	2820	110.20	110.20
23	3310	39.50	116.10
	3320	37.80	
	3330	38.80	
24	3340	38.00	77.00
	3350	39.00	
31	3470	39.00	
	3480	40.00	
	3490	40.00	
	3500	37.93	
	3510	37.80	

Tract Number	Tax Number	Acreage	Total Acreage
33	3520	.87	195.60
	3570	38.00	
	3580	39.00	
	3590	39.00	
	3600	40.00	
	3610	37.20	
	3620	40.00	
	3630	38.00	
	3640	32.00	
	3650	2.00	
38	4330	19.50	238.00
	4340	39.00	
	4350	10.00	
	4360	40.00	
	4370	20.00	
	4380	40.00	
	4390	19.50	
	4400	20.00	
	4410	30.00	
41	4500	37.00	193.00
	4510	39.00	
	4520	37.00	
	4530	40.00	
	4540	40.00	
42	4550	37.28	113.78
	4560	19.00	
	4570	5.00	
	4580	37.50	
	4590	15.00	
43	4620	4.25	341.85
	4630	39.00	
	4640	38.80	
	4650	37.80	
	4720	39.00	
	4730	26.00	
	4740	40.00	
	4750	39.00	
	4760	39.00	
	4770	39.00	
44	4660	14.00	
	4670	19.40	
	4680	39.00	
	4690	14.25	
	4700	38.00	
	4780	38.00	

Tract Number	Tax Number	Acreage	Total Acreage
	4790	39.00	
	4800	37.00	236.65
45	4710	38.80	38.80
46	4810	37.80	
	4820	38.88	
	4830	38.80	
	4840	40.00	
	4850	34.38	
	4860	37.88	227.74
48	5470	39.00	
	5480	39.00	
	5490	39.00	117.00
49	5500	39.00	
	5620	38.00	77.00
55	5770	39.00	
	5780	14.00	53.00
56	5790	39.00	
	5800	39.00	78.00
72	6720	40.00	
	6730	39.00	
	6740	40.00	
	6750	39.00	158.00
73	6760	39.00	
	6770	39.00	78.00
76	6810	40.00	
	6820	39.00	
	6830	40.00	
	6860	45.10	164.10
77	6840	37.07	
	6850	28.32	65.39
TOTAL	24 Parcels		3,862.72

PRIORITY II

Tract Number	Tax Number	Acreage	Total Acreage
2	1300	38.50	75.23
	1310	36.73	
4	2200	69.50	148.50
	2210	40.00	
	2220	39.00	
5	2230	9.50	9.50
7	2260	6.33	6.33
10	2380	16.30	16.30
13	2410	64.99	159.34
	2420	47.28	
	2430	47.07	
15	2550	38.00	77.00
	2560	39.00	
22	3230	39.00	157.50
	3240	39.00	
	3250	40.00	
	3260	39.50	
25	3360	8.00	47.00
	3370	39.00	
29	3440	34.80	73.60
	3450	38.80	
30	3460	4.00	4.00
35	3670	39.00	79.00
	3680	40.00	
39	4440	38.00	76.00
	4450	38.00	
40	4460	39.00	158.00
	4470	39.00	
	4480	40.00	
	4490	40.00	
43	4600	38.00	77.00
	4610	39.00	

Tract Number	Tax Number	Acreage	Total Acreage
47	4940	1.00	
	4950	38.00	
	4980	39.00	78.00
51	5550	39.00	39.00
52	5560	40.00	
	5570	40.00	
	5580	39.00	
	5590	39.00	
	5600	39.00	
	5610	38.00	235.00
53	5630	38.40	38.40
54	5640	40.00	
	5650	20.00	
	5660	39.00	
	5670	20.00	
	5680	1.00	
	5690	38.40	
	5700	.50	
	5710	26.00	
	5720	40.00	
	5730	40.00	
	5740	40.00	
	5750	39.00	
	5760	40.00	383.90
57	5810	37.00	
	5820	39.00	76.00
62	6480	25.00	
	6490	5.00	
	6580	6.00	
	6590	40.00	
	6600	20.00	96.00
63	6500	39.00	
	6510	20.00	59.00
64	6520	38.00	
	6530	11.50	
	6531	8.00	57.50
65	6540	31.92	
	6550	25.00	
	6560	19.50	
	6561	3.00	
	6562	14.00	93.42

Tract Number	Tax Number	Acreage	Total Acreage
66	6570	21.00	21.00
71	6710	38.00	38.00
74	6780	40.00	
	6790	40.00	88.00
75	6800	37.09	37.09
78	6910	38.00	
	6940	39.00	77.00
79	7010	39.00	
	7020	36.27	75.27
TOTAL	31 Parcels		2,656.88

PRIORITY III

Tract Number	Tax Number	Acreage	Total Acreage
3	2130	51.40	
	2140	66.00	
	2150	60.83	
	2160	12.00	
	2170	15.00	
	2180	75.40	280.63
8	2320	38.00	
	2330	39.00	77.00
11	2390	2.00	2.00
12	2400	2.00	2.00
14	2470	47.00	47.00
17	2755	25.42	
	2782	.96	
	2790	12.75	
	2800	1.00	40.13
18	2760	40.00	
	2770	37.00	77.00
19	2810	9.50	9.50
20	2815	29.50	
	2830	38.00	67.50
26	3380	31.00	
	3390	40.00	
	3400	40.00	111.00
27	3410	38.61	38.61
28	3420	40.00	
	3430	40.00	80.00
32	3530	38.00	
	3540	39.00	
	3550	40.00	117.00
34	3660	7.00	7.00
50	5510	40.00	
	5520	40.00	
	5530	40.00	

Tract Number	Tax Number	Acreage	Total Acreage
58	5540	40.00	160.00
	5850	19.50	
	5860	20.00	
	5870	40.00	
	5880	40.00	
	5890	39.00	
	5900	20.00	178.50
59	5910	20.00	178.50
	5920	39.50	
	5930	39.00	
	5940	40.00	
	5950	40.00	
60	5960	39.00	78.00
	5970	39.00	
61	6450	40.00	89.00
	6460	39.00	
	6470	10.00	
67	6610	7.72	8.62
	6620	.90	
68	6640	6.85	6.85
69	6650	19.09	79.00
	6660	30.00	
	6670	5.00	
	6680	25.00	
70	6690	16.60	24.82
	6700	8.22	
TOTAL	23 Parcels		1,759.66